

In the claims:

1. (Currently Amended) An article of footwear comprising:
  - a. a shoe having a first flap and a second flap, said first and second flaps having a plurality of eyelets extending between a first end and a second end of said flaps;
  - b. a lace comprising a first end and a second end, said lace having a length sufficient to be threaded through said plurality of eyelets starting at said first end and ending at said second end of said flaps; and
  - c. a flange located proximate said second ends of said flaps;wherein  
when said lace is secured at said second end of said flaps, at least one loop is formed adjacent said first ends of said flaps, and  
when said at least one loop is received by said flange, said at least one loop extends from said first ends of said flaps proximate said second ends of said flaps.
2. (Original) The article of footwear of claim 1, further comprising a releasable clamp located proximate said second ends of said flaps, said flange being formed on said releasable clamp.
3. (Original) The article of footwear of claim 2, said releasable clamp further comprising:
  - a. respective input apertures that receive said first and said second ends of said lace, and
  - b. respective output apertures through which said first and said second ends of said lace pass, wherein, when at least one of said first and said second ends of said lace are pulled through said respective input and output apertures, said releasable clamp releasably secures said lace inward on the length of said lace from said at least one of said first and said second lace ends.
4. (Original) The article of footwear of claim 1, further comprising a locking mechanism adapted to releasably receive said lace so that a portion of said lace forms a loop between said first end and said second end of said lace, said locking mechanism being adapted to allow for the adjustment of the length of said loop.
5. (Original) The article of footwear of claim 1, wherein said lace is an elastic material.

6. (Original) The article of footwear of claim 2, said releasable clamp further comprising a plurality of gripping surfaces for releasably securing said first and said second ends of said lace.
7. (Original) The article of footwear of claim 4, said locking mechanism further comprises a body and a wheel, wherein said wheel is slidably received by said body so as to releasably secure said lace within said body.
8. (Original) The article of footwear of claim 3, wherein said respective output apertures are combined to form a single output aperture.
9. (Original) The article of footwear of claim 1, wherein said flange is curved.
10. (Currently Amended) An article of footwear comprising:
  - a. a sole;
  - b. an upper portion connected to said sole and defining a plurality of eyelets;
  - c. a lace comprising a first end and a second end, said lace having a length sufficient to be threaded through said plurality of eyelets starting at a second side of said plurality of said eyelets and ending at said first side of said plurality of said eyelets; and
  - d. a flange located at a said first side of said plurality of eyelets proximate a toe portion of said upper portion, said flange defining a recessed portion;wherein  
when said lace is secured at said first side, at least one loop is formed adjacent a said second side of said plurality of eyelets distal from said toe portion, and  
said at least one loop is received by said flange recessed portion.
11. (Original) The article of footwear of claim 10, further comprising a releasable clamp located at said first side of said plurality of eyelets, wherein, when at least one of said first and said second ends of said lace are pulled through said releasable clamp, said releasable clamp releasably secures said lace inward on the length of said lace from said at least one of said first and said second ends.
12. (Original) The article of footwear of claim 11, where said releasable clamp defines said flange.
13. (Original) The article of footwear of claim 10, where said recessed flange portion is concave in shape.

14. (Original) The article of footwear of claim 10, further comprising a locking mechanism having:
- a. a body; and
  - b. a wheel,
- wherein
- said wheel is slidably received in said body so as to releasably secure said lace within said body so that a portion of said lace forms said at least one loop between said first end and said second end of said lace, and
- said locking mechanism being adapted to allow for the adjustment of the length of said loop.
15. (Original) The article of footwear of claim 10, wherein said lace is an elastic material.
16. (Original) The article of footwear of claim 11, said releasable clamp further comprising respective input apertures that receive said first and said second ends of said lace, and respective output apertures through which said first and said second ends of said lace pass.
17. (Currently Amended) A method of lacing footwear comprising:
- a. providing a shoe having a first and a second flap, said flaps defining a plurality of eyelets therein extending from a first side to a second side;
  - b. passing a lace through said plurality of eyelets beginning at said second side and ending at said first side so that tightening said lace tends to pull said flaps toward each other, wherein said lace has a first end and an opposite second end;
  - c. providing a flange defining a recess at a said first side of said plurality of eyelets;
  - d. forming at least one loop in said lace at a said second side of said plurality of eyelets;
  - e. securing said at least one loop around said flange so that said at least one loop extends from said second side of said plurality of eyelets proximate to said first side of said plurality of eyelets.
18. (Original) The method of lacing footwear of claim 17, wherein step (b) includes initially threading said first and said second ends of said lace through said second side of said plurality of eyelets which are located furthest from a toe end of said shoe so that

- said first and second ends of said lace finally thread through said first end of said plurality of eyelets which are proximate said toe end of said shoe so that said at least one loop is located distal from said toe portion of said shoe.
19. (Original) The method of lacing footwear of claim 17, step (d) further comprising locking together at least two points along the length of said lace, said at least two points being between said first end and said second end of said lace so that said at least one loop is formed between said at least two points.
  20. (Original) The method of lacing footwear of claim 19, wherein said step of locking further includes securing together said at least two points along the length of said lace in a cord fastener.
  21. (Original) The method of lacing footwear of claim 20, further comprising selecting said two points by sliding said cord fastener toward or away from said first and second ends of said lace to respectively increase or decrease the length of said at least one loop.
  22. (Original) The method of lacing footwear of claim 17, further comprising securing said first end and said second end of said lace in a releasable clamp having
    - a. respective input apertures for receiving said first and said second ends of said lace;
    - b. respective output apertures through which said first and said second ends of said lace are passable; and
    - c. a plurality of gripping surfaces that releasably secure said lace in said releasable clamp.
  23. (Original) The method of lacing footwear of claim 22, the step of securing said first and said second ends of said lace in said releasable clamp further comprising passing at least one of said first end and said second end of said lace through its respective input and output apertures of said releasable clamp so that a sufficient amount of said lace passes therethrough to define a desired length of said lace.
  24. (Original) The method of lacing footwear of claim 23, said method further comprising, following the step of securing said first and said second ends of said lace in said releasable clamp, cutting an excess length of lace from said at least one of said first and said second ends of said lace.

25. (Original) The method of lacing footwear of claim 22, wherein said flange is formed on an outer surface of said releasable clamp.
26. (Original) The method of lacing footwear of claim 17, wherein said recess is bounded by a curved wall.